

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 VO-05 CA-01
INSE-00 /047 W

-----064477 010117Z /72

R 281710Z FEB 78
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6572
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH POLICY ON INDOCHINESE BOAT REFUGEES

REF: A) STATE 50283, B) PARIS 5480

1. MISSION HAS BEEN UNABLE TO MEET WITH FRENCH MISOFF
RESPONSIBLE FOR REFUGEES (HIRLEMANN) TO DISCUSS POINTS
REF (A), SINCE SHE PARTICIPATING FULL TIME IN CURRENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION SESSIONS, FOR WHICH SHE IS ALSO
RESPONSIBLE. HOWEVER, SINCE QUESTIONS RAISED REF (A)
SEEM DIRECTED MORE TOWARD UNHCR IN ANY CASE, MISSION HAS
DISCUSSED MATTER WITH UNHCR'S BOAT CASE CONTROL OFFICER,
DEMMER-THORNBERRY, WITH FOLLOWING RESULTS.

2. DEMMER STATES THAT UNHCR AND ITS FIELD REPS ARE
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"FULLY AWARE" OF FRENCH POLICY IN THIS REGARD. IN
FACT, SHE STATES, THEY ARE WORKING ACTIVELY WITH THE
FRENCH TO STREAMLINE AND STANDARDIZE PROCEDURES TO
ACCELERATE THE FLOW OF BOAT CASE REFUGEES TO FRANCE.
IN THE PHILIPPINES, FOR INSTANCE, WHERE THE FRENCH
EMBASSY, UNIQUELY IN THE AREA, REQUIRES A "CERTIFICAT
D'HEBERGEMENT" (SORT OF AFFIDAVIT OF SUPPORT) FOR BOAT

CASES, WHICH HAS THE RESULT OF SLOWING OR BLOCKING SOME CASES, UNHCR GENEVA IS WORKING THROUGH PARIS TO HAVE THIS REQUIREMENT WAIVED. IN BANGKOK, WHERE SELECTION IS MADE BY THE FRENCH MISSION, WHICH ALSO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO ISSUE VISAS ON THE SPOT, UNHCR IS SEEKING MOST LIBERAL INTERPRETATION OF REQUIREMENT FOR DEMONSTRATES TIES (LIENS) WITH FRANCE FOR BOAT CASES.

3. ASKED IF SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO UNHCR FIELD REPS TO BE SURE BOAT REFUGEES ARE AWARE OF OPTION TO APPLY FOR AND BE ACCEPTED BY FRANCE, DEMMER RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT IN EACH CASE WHEN UNHCR RESETTLEMENT FORMS ARE SENT FOR COMPLETION, FIELD REP IS INSTRUCTED TO HAVE REFUGEE INDICATE WHICH COUNTRY THEY WISH TO GO TO, INCLUDING, AND NOTABLY, FRANCE. REPS ARE INSTRUCTED TO ATTEMPT TO ORIENT REFUGEES TOWARD COUNTRIES WHERE THEIR RESETTLEMENT COULD BE MORE EASILY AND SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED BECAUSE OF SUCH FACTORS AS FAMILY TIES, PAST BUSINESS OR WORKING RELATIONS, LANGUAGE ABILITIES AND SO FORTH. AS CONCERNS LACK OF FRENCH REFUGEE PROGRAM REPS IN SOME COUNTRIES OF TEMPORARY ASYLUM, DEMMER REPLIED THAT IN THESE CASES UNHCR WORKS WITH DESIGNATED OFFICIALS IN FRENCH MISSIONS, WHO ARE QUITE AWARE OF GOF POSITION ON ACCEPTANCE OF BOAT CASES. IN VIEW OF THIS KNOWLEDGE ON PART OF BOTH UNHCR AND FRENCH REPS, DEMMER FELT THAT SPECIFIC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INSTRUCTION TO FORMER ON THIS MATTER WOULD BE "SUPER-FLUOUS" AND, WHEN PUT THE QUESTION WHETHER UNHCR REPS CAN BE CONSIDERED AS INFORMED ON FRENCH POLICY TO POINT THEY CONVEY THIS CONSISTENTLY TO REFUGEES, SHE REPLIED WITH EMPHATIC AFFIRMATIVE.

4. DEMMER VOLUNTEERED THAT SINCE THE END OF 1977 THE FRENCH HAVE BEEN MAKING A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO INCREASE THEIR NUMBER OF BOAT CASES ACCEPTANCES, BUT THEY DO NOT WISH TO PUBLICIZE THIS FACT. SHE SAID THAT, IN FACT, THEY QUICKLY WITHDREW A STATEMENT MADE RECENTLY (PLACE AND TIME UNSPECIFIED) TO EFFECT THAT THEY WOULD TAKE BOAT CASES OVER AND BEYOND THEIR ESTABLISHED ONE THOUSAND MONTHLY FIGURE, BUT THAT THIS NONETHELESS REMAINED THEIR INTENTION.

5. OF INTEREST IN THIS CONNECTION ARE FIGURES JUST PUBLISHED IN TABLE BY UNHCR WHICH INDICATES THAT DURING PERIOD APRIL 1975 THROUGH JANUARY 1978, FRANCE HAD ACCEPTED 1584 BOAT CASES, OUT OF TOTAL OF 29,255 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES, PLUS 10,801 NOT REGISTERED BY UNHCR BRANCH OFFICE BANGKOK. BY CONTRAST, AUSTRALIA IS

SHOWN AS HAVING ACCEPTED 3,402 BOAT CASES, OUT OF TOTAL
6,682 FOR SAME PERIOD, WHILE FIGURES FOR U.S. ARE 7,815
OUT OF 33,161 (LATTER DOES NOT INCLUDE INITIAL PROGRAM).
VANDEN HEUVEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GENEVA03165
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780092-1108
Format: TEL
From: GENEVA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978025/aaaaadof.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d0c5f2d8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 50283, 78 PARIS 5480
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3579681
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH POLICY ON INDOCHINESE BOAT REFUGEES
TAGS: SREF, FR, XC
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d0c5f2d8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014